

NCA  
VOC FOR IOP/FN  
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BROWN/NEW DELHI

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# JANATA'S FIRST YEAR

## ANNCR:

A YEAR AGO THIS MONTH, (3/22/77) A LOOSE AMALGAM OF INDIAN OPPOSITION PARTIES KNOWN AS THE JANATA OR PEOPLE'S PARTY, PERFORMED WHAT MANY PEOPLE THOUGHT WAS IMPOSSIBLE. IN UNSEATING FORMER PRIME MINISTER INDIRA GANDHI, THE JANATA PARTY ENDED THIRTY YEARS OF UNBROKEN RULE BY HER CONGRESS PARTY AND TOUCHED OFF A WAVE OF UNBRIDLED OPTIMISM IN THE COUNTRY. A FULL CALENDAR YEAR LATER, THE MOOD IN NEW DELHI APPEARS MORE INTROSPECTIVE AND LESS EUPHORIC AS CORRESPONDENT FRED BROWN POINTS OUT IN THIS BACKGROUND REPORT.

## VOICE:

THE JANATA PARTY SWEEP TO POWER LARGELY IN THE STRENGTH OF ITS LEADERS' ELECTORAL PROMISE, THAT IT WOULD RESTORE TO THE PEOPLE THEIR DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES. THESE RIGHTS HAD SUFFERED DURING THE LATTER PART OF INDIRA GANDHI'S RULE, WHEN SHE INVOKED THE STATE OF EMERGENCY AND DETAINED VIRTUALLY ALL OF THE COUNTRY'S OPPOSITION LEADERS. MOST OF THE JANATA LEADERS WHO CAMPAIGNED AGAINST MRS. GANDHI HAD ONLY JUST BEEN RELEASED FROM JAIL, AND THE MEMORIES OF THE INDIGNITY SUFFERED WERE FRESH IN THEIR MINDS.

A YEAR LATER, THEIR PLEDGE TO THE PEOPLE, TO A LARGE EXTENT, HAS BEEN REDEEMED. PRESS FREEDOM IS FULLY RESTORED. AND WITH THE EXCEPTION OF A FEW HARD-CORE EXTREMISTS, ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS HAVE BEEN RELEASED. LAST WEEK, AFTER ENCOUNTERING STIFF OPPOSITION, THE JANATA GOVERNMENT ALSO DECIDED TO DROP EFFORTS TO KEEP GREATLY MODIFIED POWERS OF PREVENTIVE DETENTION.

THE PROPOSED NEW LAW WOULD HAVE LET THE GOVERNMENT HOLD WITHOUT TRIAL PERSONS DEEMED A THREAT TO NATIONAL SECURITY.

THE JANATA PARTY HAS ALSO TAKEN STEPS TO IMPLEMENT ANOTHER ELECTION PLEDGE; THAT IS TO RE-ORIENT INDIA'S ECONOMY TO MEET THE NEEDS AND ASPIRATIONS OF ITS GREAT MASS OF RURAL POOR. THE NEW JANATA BUDGET PRESENTED TO PARLIAMENT EARLY THIS MONTH IS GEARED TO CREATING MORE JOBS IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR BY ESTABLISHING A NETWORK OF SMALL-SCALE INDUSTRIES AND BY PROMOTING COTTAGE INDUSTRY, THAT IS MANUFACTURING IN THE HOME.

IN ITS FOREIGN POLICY TOO, THE JANATA ADMINISTRATION'S PERFORMANCE IN ITS FIRST YEAR IN OFFICE WAS MARKED BY APPRECIABLE IMPROVEMENT, ESPECIALLY IN INDIA'S RELATIONS WITH ITS IMMEDIATE NEIGHBORS, INCLUDING BOTH CHINA AND PAKISTAN. INDIA'S APPROACH TOWARD THE MAJOR POWERS UNDER PRIME MINISTER MORARJI DESAI HAS BEEN ONE OF GENUINE NON-ALIGNMENT.

ALL IS NOT WELL IN ALL FRONTS, HOWEVER. THE FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAM WHICH IS SO IMPORTANT FOR INDIA'S SURVIVAL AND ECONOMIC PROGRESS, FOR INSTANCE, HAS FOUNDERED BADLY -- THIS HAS BEEN BLAMED ON PUBLIC MEMORIES OF THE COERCIVE METHODS ADOPTED DURING THE STATE OF EMERGENCY. A DETERIORATION IN THE LAW AND ORDER SITUATION, INCIDENTS GROWING OUT OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST THE BACKWARD CLASSES, AND GROWING STUDENT UNREST, ARE AMONG THE OTHER MINUSES CHARGED TO JANATA RULE.

INDIA'S ELDER STATESMAN, JAYAPRAKASH NARAYAN, THE MAN WHO WAS PERHAPS MORE INSTRUMENTAL THAN ANYONE ELSE IN THE JANATA VICTORY, SUMMED UP THE PARTY'S RECORD IN THESE WORDS LAST WEEK. SAID MISTER NARAYAN, "WHILE THE PERFORMANCE OF THE PARTY IN THE POLITICAL AND CERTAIN OTHER FIELDS IS NOT AS BAD AS RATED BY PUBLIC OPINION, THE PROMISES MADE BY IT IN REGARD TO SOCIAL

AND ECONOMIC REFORMS IN ITS ELECTION MANIFESTO HAVE MOSTLY REMAINED UNFULFILLED."

PERHAPS TOO MUCH IS EXPECTED OF THE JANATA WHICH EMERGED AS THE CONGLOMERATION OF FIVE POLITICAL PARTIES. EMOTIONAL COHESION AMONG ITS CONSTITUENTS IS YET TO BE ACHIEVED. ORGANIZATIONAL ELECTIONS ARE YET TO BE HELD, AND A BASIC JANATA STRUCTURE IS YET TO EMERGE. AS ONE JANATA LEADER PUT IT RECENTLY, "JANATA IS STILL A GOVERNMENT AND NOT A PARTY."

GH/RCS